Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat

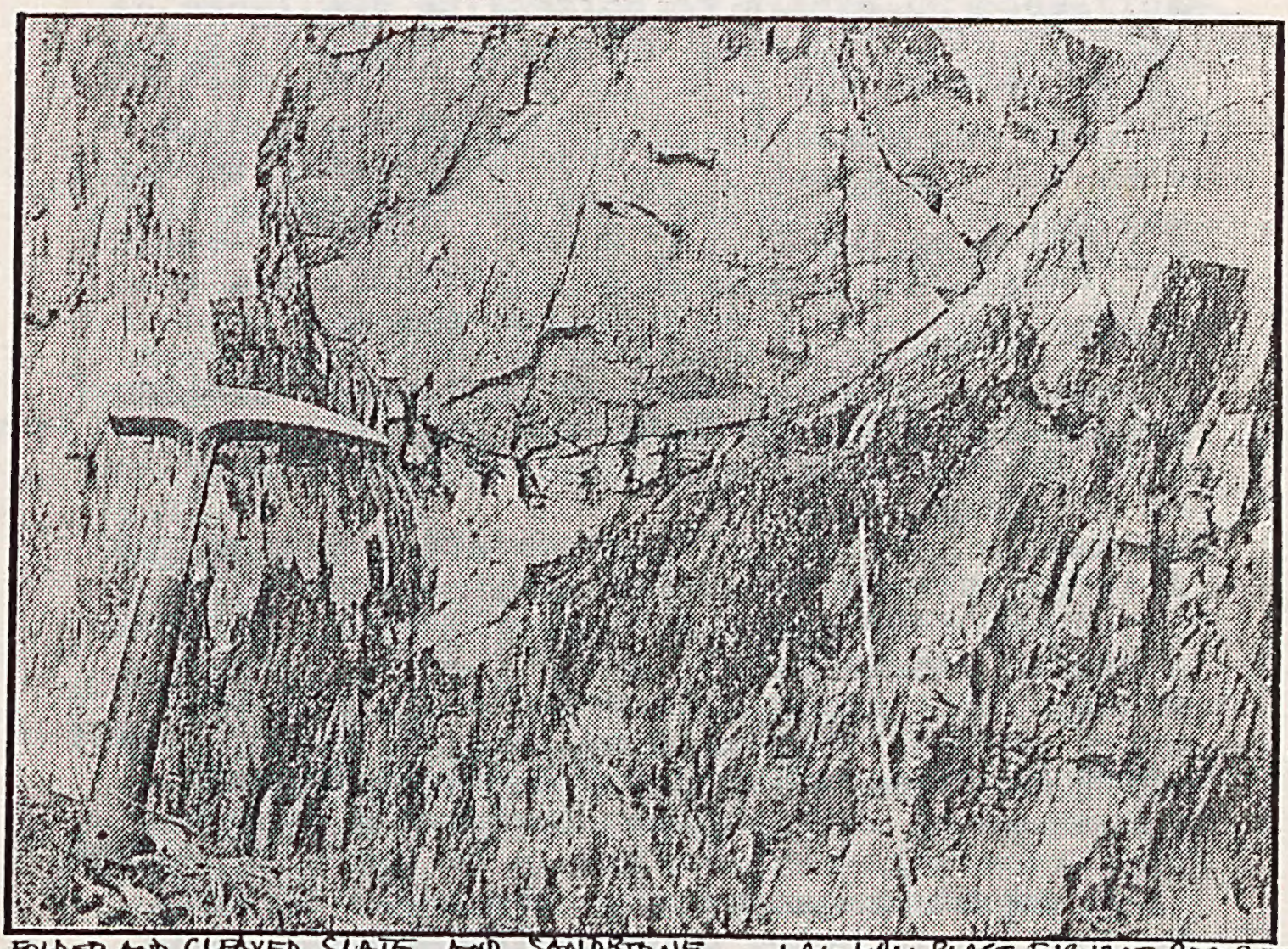
May. 1984

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Meeting 4th May - "The Local Habitat and Geology"
Speaker: Mr. P. Day

Meeting 1st June - "Conservation - Conflict or Compromise"
Speaker: Hon. R. Mackenzie
(See notes on Page 2)

Excursion 6th May - Local Geology.
Leader: Mr P. Day
3rd June - See notes on Page 6.



FOLDED AND CLEAVED SLATE AND SANDSTONE - LAL LAL BLAST FURNACE RESERVE.

President: Miss H Burgess 312210
Secretary: Miss J Binns 323670
Treasurer: Mrs F Williamson 327631
Editors: Mr G Binns 323670
Mr L Fink 052 861319

Meetings, as specified, are held in the Art Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 7.30pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS, BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTINGS, OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

REPORTS APRIL MEETING

Florence Williamson.

Spotted Turtledoves in house garden have raised one young.

Roger Thomas.

Small flock of Cattle Egrets on Flaxmill Swamp.

Frank Harrap.

Flock of approximately 110 Redtailed Black Cockatoos observed 17 Km. east of Casterton.

Harvey Hooper.

Description of Mutton birds returning to burrows and young birds.- W.V.F.N.C.A. Port Fairy.

JUNE MEETING--SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Members are reminded that the Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture will commence at 8pm on our next meeting night, at St Pauls Hall, Victoria Street.

Helpers are asked to attend at 4pm to assist with the organization and decoration of the hall, and members to provide food for supper for this special annual event.

SURVEY--YELLOW TAILED BLACK COCKATOOS

A request for reports on movements and habits of Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos has been received from Jill McLean, one of a group studying these fascinating birds.

Forms are available for recording the required details, also some useful notes to assist in noting destinations, composition of flocks, activity of birds, etc.

As any information will be of value, members are urged to gather details and assist in this study which is aimed at looking at movements and and seasonal distribution in Eastern Australia. This knowledge may eventually be used to protect the largest cockatoo of our region! If you Would like to help, contact the Secretary; or Jill McLean P.O. Box236 Falls Creek, 3699.

APRIL MEETING REPORT--BATS--

Dr.W.Holsworth, Bendigo F.N. Mammal Survey Group, was guest speaker at our last meeting and his talk about those small nocturnal visitors was most interesting and full of information. St Aidan's Orphanage Bendigo no longer functions as such but has been taken over as a tertiary education centre and has been used by several species of bats as a roosting place, thus being a good study location. In the years of operation of the Mammal Study Gr. 7 different species, 3 rare, 4 common, have been observed at Bendigo. There are 20 species recorded for Victoria.

A bat trap used since Feb. 1982 (exhibited and explained to us) has caught up to 125 specimens at a time and since Mar. 1983 over 400 have been banded.

An excellent collection of slides of operations, and features of bats was screened. An explanation of features used to separate the species, viz. wingshape, flight pattern, tail shape, and size was of great interest

Bats operate after dark by an echo-location system whereby a sound (which may be pulsed) of constant frequency, or frequency modulated, is transmitted and the echo received telling where there may be an obstruction or insect.

Insects scooped by the tail piece and while flight continues are eaten by the bat which doubles the head back below the body into the tail.

Explaining reproduction; it has been noted that the female stores sperm, after mating, for several months. Then follows a 40 to 60 day gestation period, after which follows a 20 to 40 day lactation period. Maturity is reached in one year, bats may live from 10 to 30 years. The breeding season depends on insect supply, for diffirent species varies from early Sep. to late Mar.

Mrs Keirath thanked the speaker for a most interesting session.

Peter Fry.

W.V.F.N.C.A. CAMPOUT WARRNAMBOOL REPORT

Eight members attended the Western Victorian Assoc. campout hosted by the Warnambool F.N.C. during 7-8 April and experienced a weekend full of interest under kind weather conditions that were contrary to forecasts.

In keeping with the time of year observational excursions were made to four coastal habitats, and visits to the Ralph Illidge Sanctuary and Tower Hill State Game Reserve. On the Saturday evening following the business meeting of the Association Mr Pat Urbonas displayed and spoke on specimens of indigenous flora.

Dr John Sherwood presented findings on his research into the history, geology and ecology of the estuary of the Hopkins River. The evening was most informative, particularly to the members of visiting clubs.

At the Griffith Island, Port Fairy, Short Tailed Shearwaters (mutton bird) rookery (which accommodates an estimated 30,000 birds) members were able to observe adult birds returning to the burrows and to examine a juvenile at close hand. Adults depart on their migratory flights during mid April, and the young birds follow in early May.

Lake Pertobe, lying the Warrnambool central city area and the foreshore, provided an interesting example of the developement of a swamp into a multi purpose recreation and wildlife habitat. The City Council has in recent years developed the eastern section for various tourist and recreation -al uses and the western end as an environment for birds.

Observers were concerned to see a number of Mallard Duck on the water with Black Duck. The local club has recorded 77 bird species in this area - a good spot to visit during a stop over in Warnambool.

Two beaches frequented by migratory waders were visited - at Killarney and further east, the "Mahogany Ship" area. These are superb coastal areas with the lagoon of the Merri River providing a sheltered haven behind the dunes in one section.

Although the majority of the waders had departed

on their northern flight there were good sightings of Sanderlings, Turnstones, Pied and Sooty Oyster Catchers, Red Necked Stints, and large groups of Red Capped Dotterels. Afresh specimen of a beach washed Dove Prion was found at the waters edge.
The Tower Hill State Game Reserve is now well on the way to restoration of the vegetation.
The replanting programme commenced in the early 1960's has produced a complex habitat of carefully selected trees and shrubs with the result that the bird list has increased from 60 to 160 in the interim period. The reserve is well managed, and many satisfying walks are available to the natur--alist. Of special interest are the Magpie Geese released after breeding at Serendip Research Station with the hope that they will breed and reestablish in suitable areas in Western Victoria. Special sightings of Double Banded Dotterals (5) and Royal Spoonbills made the visit even more enjoyable.
The Saturday afternoon was spent at two contrasting but awe inspiring venues in the Hopkin's Falls and the Ralph Illidge Sanctuary. The Falls were spectacular with a good body of water flowing but the Sanctuary provided a sobering element with the realization of the devastation of the Ash Wednesday fire of 1983 which completely razed the reserve. Mrs Frazer, the resident warden, explained the affect on the fauna and flora and spoke on the regeneration of growth and observed signs of the return of animal life. A small number of potoroo have survived.
The weekend provided much of interest, to be enjoyed in the good company of kindred Spirits from member clubs of Western Victoria. The next such event is scheduled for Aug. 10 - 12, at Woodwood on the River Murray - well worth planning for!

G.W.Binns.

ERRATA APR.NEWSLETTER

Pages 3 @ 6 should read GOODENIACEAE
should read LECHENAULTIA
should read SCAEVOLA
We apologise to Frank Harrap; page 5, please add Vice President Dr Frank Harrap

STATE WIDE MENTOR PROGRAM

Mr John Cotter of the Special Education Unit, 44 East St, Ballarat has contacted the club to inform and hopefully to enlist support of members in this educational program.

The program aims at catering for the educational needs of highly-able children who may require, in addition to more formal activities, an opportunity to communicate with experts in their respective areas of talent.

The mentor can work with children in either small groups or on a one to one basis to encourage and develop their potential. The number of children involved will be restricted to those deemed to have a particular need for this type of assistance. The register containing details will be confiden--tial, and contacts will always be arra nged by the organization.

If any member would like further information, please contact John who is the local regional organizer. Phone 053 313170.

JUNE EXCURSION

The June excursion will be a working bee at the Linton block at the 92 mile post on the Skipton road, leaving Crockers corner at 9.30 AM.

Anyone who wishes to come later, go to the 92 mile post and look for the entrance on the left (from Ballarat).

You will need gloves, hoes, spades, etc, for removing noxious weeds.

Lunch at 12.30; there are barbecues at Mrs Knight's place.

1985 NATURALIST SAFARI

Members may be interested in the Kingston's tours safari planned for next year.

A twenty two day tour will visit the Warrumbungles, Carnarvon Gorge, Fraser Island, and Lamington National Park and Lightning Ridge.

Further information may be obtained from the Stawell office of the Tours. Phone 053 581214

CENTRAL NATURE HISTORY ARCHIVE

The Sunraysia Naturalist Research Trust has initiated moves for the consideration of a central archive for records of natural history subjects. Many valuable collections, notes and specimens, collections of visual records, field observations, are held in private homes and run the risk of being neglected, destroyed or lost to future usage such as reference or research.
Naturalists who compile these records are often concerned about the future of the material and should welcome such a scheme if it comes to fruition.
Through the Premier, the Minister of the Arts (including Museums) is to convene a meeting of representatives of Naturalist and Museum bodies to discuss the proposal.

TRAGEDY

A sad note to the Easter visit to the coast was a beach washed 'find' by two of my daughters at Skenes Creek.
The bodies of two Albatrosses were discovered very closely entangled in a length of nylon fishing line.
The birds had apparantly drowned quite recently and were identified as fine specimens of the yellow nosed (the smallest albatross) and the black browed (immature phase).
This brought home once again the danger to birds (and other animals) of these transparent lines, and the memory of the Jacky Winter which Ivan Tiley found hanged on a fine fishing line left dangling, by a careless fisherman, from a branch at a local fishing hole.

Greg Binns.

NEW BOOK

The club has purchased a new book for those whose interest is Victorian Trees. This book should be of interest-it is called "TREE DISEASES IN VICTORIA" and should be an asset to the club.

YOU YANGS OUTING APRIL 15

When you travel along the road between Geelong and Melbourne you realise that you are on a plain so flat that there are very few rises. Across the lush pastures of the board of works farm you see a line of boldly carved hills rising abruptly from the plains; these are the You Yangs.

The Aborigines called them Wurdi Yowang (big hills). These Granite hills and the base slopes make up a forest park of 2000 hectares, with open timbered and dense planted forest.

The You Yangs were never Volcanoes.

The rock is granite in a single mass called a Monadnock, all of which is cooled from molten material well below the Earth's surface (Magma).

The speckled rock is made up of large crystals of Felspar, Black sparkling Mica, and dullclear Quartz, the hardest of the minerals and remains long after the rest has weathered away.

The characteristic weathering of Granite leaves a curved surface. In this way boulders or tors are common on granite hills. On the You Yangs there are thousands of them from small to very large. Some, like Big Rock, have hollows filled with sand and humus with large trees growing in them.

The rock on the surrounding plains is Basalt (Lava), a fine grained rock that cooled quickly.

From Flinders Peak you can see the whole of the You Yangs forest park: trees and bushes, hills, valleys, roads and tracks, and the picnic places that make them a place of recreation and beauty.

Twelve members journeyed there principally to find the Brittle Greenhood (P truncata) one of our rare orchids, but without any luck. This was around the stock yard area. However there were other interest--ing things to see and birds were plentiful. Then onto a small dam which is a wonderful area for birds including two eagles and their nest in a large tree. The resident Ranger went with us, we also saw an old Aborigine well in one of the tors.

Altogether a most enjoyable visit, well worth going again.